

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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May 22, 2013

The Hon. Chuck Hagel
Secretary
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Hon. Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretaries Hagel and Shinseki:

I commend you on your announced plan to utilize private sector resources and knowledge to enhance electronic health records for military and veterans. This is a positive—and long overdue—step toward a functional system, and I look forward to learning the details of your proposal.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, a physician, and a veteran, I share your support for ensuring our returning servicemembers see a seamless transition between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you at a mutually convenient time in the near future to discuss legislation I recently introduced, the Integrated Electronic Health Records (iEHR) for Military and Veterans Act (H.R. 2055), which similarly aims to take advantage of the private sector's technological capabilities to solve this problem once and for all.

The legislation seeks to establish a public-private partnership to create an iEHR quickly and cost effectively. This legislation would also jumpstart coordination on development of an iEHR between DoD and VA by making the departments draft, within three months, comprehensive criteria for use in a prize competition for iEHR development.

Similar in spirit to the X Prize that led to the first privately-designed reusable space vehicle, this competition would award a prize to the system that best fits DoD and VA's needs. It would utilize universities, businesses, and individual programmers to come up with creative solutions where DoD and VA have fallen short. This private-public partnership would provide the long-promised DoD-VA integrated electronic health record at a fraction of the cost of what we have spent in governmental efforts towards development.

Again, I appreciate today's announcement as well as your consideration of my request to discuss improving the electronic health records of our men and women in uniform. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff at (202) 225-6356 on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Roe', with a large, sweeping initial 'P'.

Phil Roe, M.D.
Member of Congress

DPR/CW